

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SOVIET NATIONAL MINORITIES AND US POLICY

REF: A. MOSCOW 3124, B. MUNICH 1124

1. DEPARTMENT WELCOMES EMBASSY'S VIEWS AND COMMENTS ON SOVIET NATIONAL MINORITIES. WE ARE STUDYING THE ISSUES RAISED IN THE CONTEXT OF US POLICY OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS. IN THE MEANTIME BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING HAS SUBMITTED ITS OWN VIEWS, WHICH FOLLOW:

2. AS NOTED IN REF B), RFE/RL MANAGEMENT IS TAKING ACTION, AT BIB URGING, TO STRENGTHEN RL CAPABILITY IN THE NATIONALITIES AREA. ON INSISTENCE OF BIB CHAIRMAN GRONOUSKI, FUNDS HAVE BEEN REQUESTED IN RADIOS' FY 1979 BUDGET SUBMISSION TO PERMIT PRESENCE ON RL STAFF OF AT LEAST ONE AMERICAN

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WITH PROFICIENCY IN EACH OF 15 NON-RUSSIAN BROADCAST LANGUAGES. RECENT HIRINGS IN NATIONALITY RESEARCH AREA HAVE INCLUDED VETERAN BRITISH CENTRAL ASIAN SPECIALIST ANN SHEEHY, FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH COLONEL GEOFFREY WHEELER AT LONDON C:NTALASIAN RESEARCH CENTER; AMERICAN ACADEMIC JOHN SOPER, FORMER IREX GRANTEE IN UZBEKISTAN; UKRAINIAN SPECIALIST ROMAN

LCHANYK, FORMERLY WITH VOA UKRAINIAN SERVICE.

3. BIB, PARTICULARLY IN PAST YEAR, HAS MADE A SYSTEMATIC EFFORT THROUGH ITS STAFF TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN SCHOLARS SPECIALIZING IN SOVIET NATIONALITIES QUESTIONS. AT THE PROMPTING OF CHAIRMAN GRONOUSKI, ITS BUDGET REQUEST INCLUDES PROVISIONS TO EXPAND UNDER ITS AUSPICES EVALUATION OF NATIONALITIES BROADCASTS BY QUALIFIED AMERICAN SPECIALISTS WITH APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND AREA EXPERTISE. THESE WILL SUPPLEMENT IN-HOUSE REVIEWS OF NATIONALITY BROADCASTS AS WELL AS ANY THAT MAY BE FORTHCOMING FROM KIEV OR OTHER POSTS WITH APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE CAPABILITY. BIB, THROUGH ITS ACADEMIC AND OTHER CONTACTS IN THE FIELD, IS ALSO RENDERING PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE TO RL IN SUCH AREAS AS RECRUITMENT OF NATIONALITIES SPECIALISTS FOR PROGRAMMING AND RESEARCH.

4. FOR THE EMBASSY'S INFORMATION, BIB IN CONSIDERING ITS PRIORITIES FOR NATIONALITIES BROADCASTS, WHICH WERE WORKED OUT IN CONJUNCTION WITH DEPARTMENT, HAS BEEN GUIDED BY EVIDENCE FROM TRAVELERS, EXCHANGE SCHOLARS, JOURNALISTS, ETC., THAT THE NATIONALITIES ARE ACUTELY RECEPTIVE TO ANY SIGN FROM ABROAD THAT THEIR SEPARATE ETHNIC IDENTITY IS RECOGNIZED. AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, THE REPEATED SUCCESS IN THE NATIONAL REPUBLICS OF
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EXHIBIT GUIDES WHO SPEAK THE LOCAL LANGUAGE UNDERSCORES THIS. ALSO, BIB IS TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THAT M.I.T.'S CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES CONCLUDED SOME YEARS AGO AFTER COMPLETING ITS COMPUTER SIMULATION OF SOVIET COMMUNICATIONS AUDIENCES THAT NON-RUSSIAN AUDIENCES TEND TO LISTEN MORE INTENSIVELY TO BROADCASTS IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGES THAN DO RUSSIANS TO BROADCASTS IN RUSSIAN.

5. PROPOSED OPENING OF CONSULATE IN TASHKENT WOULD PROVIDE INVALUABLE SITE FOR MONITORING BROADCASTS TO CENTRAL ASIA. BIB ALSO LOOKS FORWARD TO MONITORING DATA FROM KAP AND TRAVELERS IN NATIONAL AREAS WHO HEAR NATIONALITY BROADCASTS.

6. BIB WISHES TO ASSURE EMBASSY THAT ITS ACTIVITIES ARE ENTIRELY IN HARMONY WITH REF (A) EMPHASIS ON RESTRAINT IN DEALING WITH NATIONALITIES QUESTIONS. SUCH RESTRAINT IS REFLECTED IN THE BIB "MISSION STATEMENT" AND RFE/RL POLICY GUIDELINES. IN ANY CASE, BIB SEES LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT IN NORMAL TIMES RADIO

BROADCASTS ARE APT IMMEDIATELY TO AFFECT THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONALITIES, ALTHOUGH IT BELIEVES AN INCAUTIOUS APPROACH MIGHT ANTAGONIZE RUSSIANS OR NON-RUSSIANS, OR BOTH. BIB FEELS THE CONTRIBUTION OF NATIONALITIES BROADCASTS IS A CUMULATIVE ONE OVER THE YEARS, BY HELPING TO BRING THE NATIONALITIES OUT OF ISOLATION, BY PROVIDING THEM WITH INFORMATION DENIED THEM BY OFFICIAL MEDIA ON BOTH CURRENT AND HISTORICAL EVENTS OF SPECIAL RELEVANCE TO THEIR INTERESTS, AND BY BUILDING TIES AGAINST THE FUTURE. THIS LEADS NOT ONLY TO STIMULATING THE GROWTH OF NATIONAL AWARENESS SET FORTH AS AN OBJECTIVE IN REF (A), BUT ALSO RELATES IN A LOW-KEY WAY TO THE PROCESS OF "NATION-BUILDING" IDENTIFIED BY WESTERN POLITICAL SCIENTISTS AS OCCURRING IN THE UNION

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REPUBLICS.

7. AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT ASSIMILATIONIST PHENOMENA SUCH AS INTERMARRIAGE MAY PROVIDE A LONG-TERM REMEDY FOR THE REGIME, BIB READING OF WESTERN SPECIALISTS' OPINION IS THAT THESE WILL BE INSIGNIFICANT IN COMING DECADES IN THE CRUCIAL CASE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIANS AND THE MAJOR NON-EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES.

8. BIB LOOKS FORWARD TO FURTHER EMBASSY REPORTING OF EVENTS AND TRENDS AFFECTING THE NATIONALITIES. VANCE

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